



Interview with Lt. Cmdr. Jim McGowan Nutrition Programs Manager Physical Readiness Branch (PERS 676) Navy Personnel Command

Lt. Cmdr. Jim McGowan is a Registered Dietitian (RD) and member of the Medical Service Corps with a Master of Science degree. Just before his departure to the Naval Hospital Sigonella, Italy, in June, to report as the department head of nutrition management, CHIPS asked McGowan about his experiences as the Nutrition Programs Manager for the Navy and advice for a healthy lifestyle.

CHIPS: Do you think the increase in use of electronic games and devices among young adults and children has contributed to the sedentary lifestyle in these previously active age groups?

Lt. Cmdr. McGowan: If you wanted to determine why someone has become sedentary and look at different electronic devices, you could say that video games might be a contributor. Many children and young adults would rather sit in front of the television for hours playing Xbox, PS2 (PlayStation 2), etc., instead of riding a bike, running or playing.

However, while it is easy to say that inactivity is caused by spending too much time playing electronic games, the root cause is much bigger. Often parents allow this behavior to occur instead of encouraging outside activities. Physical activities in schools have also decreased giving the children the option of computer time or play time leading to more sedentary children.

CHIPS: Technology is so much a part of our lives, could technology play in a role in encouraging people to become physically fit?

Lt. Cmdr. McGowan: Absolutely. There are many computer-based programs for children which promote healthy eating and increased activity. Also, many people use pedometers (step counters) to measure calories burned. Some pedometers can be connected to a personal computer to upload data for analysis. The bottom line to remember is that no matter how fancy the program or device, you still have to get out there and exercise.

CHIPS: What do you say to someone who tells you that my job is too important; I don't have time to exercise or eat healthy? Does stress play a role in poor eating habits?

Lt. Cmdr. McGowan: 'I don't have time to exercise' is the biggest

excuse I hear. And while your job may be important, if you are not able to perform your job due to poor health (resulting from a sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy eating), then everyone loses. Most people think that exercise is a formal routine that requires at least an hour in the gym; however, all activities count toward exercising. Planning is the key. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends the following regarding activity... (See the text box on the next page.)

We all have a certain amount of stress in our lives. Excessive daily stress often leads to unhealthy eating habits and health problems. The goal is to find ways to manage it. Most bases have Health Promotion Centers which offer stress management classes. Additionally, exercise is an excellent stress reducer!

CHIPS: How would you counsel someone who has a longtime history of poor nutrition habits and a sedentary lifestyle to begin a healthier lifestyle?

Lt. Cmdr. McGowan: I start from scratch. I have service members keep a food diary for a week. In this diary, they write down everything they eat and drink, and I mean everything — breath mint, onion slice, sip of a soda — then I meet with them and discuss the diary, any medications, all activities, food likes and dislikes, medical problems, and so on.

I then calculate balanced meal and exercise plans, and discuss some basic nutrition and serving sizes. Most importantly, we work on a plan together that fits into their schedule and lifestyle. We then meet every one to two weeks to review the food diary, discuss any setbacks and make short term goals. This continues until it becomes a part of their routine. It's the behavior that must be changed.

CHIPS: What is the ShipShape program?

Lt. Cmdr. McGowan: ShipShape is the BUMED-approved weight management program. It is an eight-week program that reflects the current state of knowledge on weight loss. It is specifically designed to provide active-duty personnel with basic information on nutrition, stress management, physical activity, and behavior modification techniques to lower and maintain an acceptable body weight within Navy standards.

ShipShape is a healthy and permanent approach to weight loss. Attendance is open to all personnel, especially to active duty members who exceed, or are in danger of exceeding, body composition assessment (BCA) standards. Complete information on ShipShape may be found at <http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/shipshape/>.

CHIPS: The Naval Supply Systems Command created a healthy menu for galleys that offers baked goods and low fat food. What are some of the food choices that military members could expect to see?

Lt. Cmdr. McGowan: We all like to have a choice, especially when it comes to food. The focus is to educate Sailors to make healthier food choices. Today's galleys have more baked and low fat



Atlantic Ocean (April 29, 2006) - Airman John Lujan takes time out of his day for fitness to ensure he is ready for the upcoming semi-annual physical fitness assessment aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69). U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Andrew Geraci.

food choices. A complete listing of recipes may be found on Navy Knowledge Online or the Naval Logistics Library (<https://nll1.ahf.nmci.navy.mil/recipe/>).

One misconception is that you can eat more food if it's lower in fat. While lower fat is healthier, the problem then becomes too many calories. Typically if you eat more calories than your body requires (and burns), it gets stored as energy (fat). The following paragraph is from the NAVSUP Web site ...

"Nutrition is a hot topic today, and the Navy's senior leadership is aware of the enlarging waistline and increase in Sailors' weight. A new requirement for the NAVSUP Registered Dietitian is to publish the metric of how many menu reviews conducted receive a passing score of 90 percent or better. The head of NAVSUP reviews this metric."

In accordance with the NAVSUP P-486, there is a requirement to have a mandatory annual menu review performed by the NAVSUP dietitian for all galleys. This evaluation includes a variety of criteria and receiving a score of 90 or greater indicates that a command is providing a menu that meets the nutritional guidelines outlined in Chapter 3 of the P-486. This publication contains all pertinent information necessary to write a menu that provides adequate nutrition and choices for Sailors.

Following a menu review, commands are mailed a package with recommendations for improvements to the menu, along with nutrition education materials. Commands scoring less than 90 percent are required to make the recommended changes and resubmit in order to achieve an acceptable menu score.

All commands have a copy of the P-486, and culinary specialists responsible for developing menus should be thoroughly aware of the contents contained in Chapter 3.

CHIPS: Why is it important to take a total approach to wellness?

Lt. Cmdr. McGowan: We must all be conscious of our total health. It's more than just eating right and exercising. Managing stress, tobacco cessation, alcohol responsibility, drug awareness and mental health are just as important. As I said, our bodies only require a certain number of calories (*taking into consideration the amount of exercise, metabolism, age, health and so on*), anything above that number gets stored as extra weight (fat).

Commands interested in starting a ShipShape program can go to the Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC) site at www.nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/shipshape/index.htm. There are resources on this site also available to civilian personnel.

The self-study guide is available (along with other health and nutrition resources) to anyone and can be found online at www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/PhysicalReadiness/Nutrition.

For related news, visit the Navy Personnel Command Navy News-Stand page at www.news.navy.mil/local/npc/.

Editor's Note: Cmdr. Alice Whitley is the new Navy Nutrition Programs Manager. CHIPS

Recommendations for a Healthy Lifestyle

Engage in regular physical activity and reduce sedentary activities to promote health, psychological well-being, and a healthy body weight.

To reduce the risk of chronic disease in adulthood: Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, above usual activity, at work or home on most days of the week.

For most people, greater health benefits can be obtained by engaging in physical activity of more vigorous intensity or longer duration.

To help manage body weight and prevent gradual, unhealthy body weight gain in adulthood: Engage in approximately 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity on most days of the week while not exceeding caloric intake requirements.

To sustain weight loss in adulthood: Participate in at least 60 to 90 minutes of daily moderate-intensity physical activity while not exceeding caloric intake requirements. Some people may need to consult with a healthcare provider before participating in this level of activity.

Achieve physical fitness by including cardiovascular conditioning, stretching exercises for flexibility, and resistance exercises or calisthenics for muscle strength and endurance.

Put down that PDA and get moving!